

Volunteers honored by VAMC

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The Lake City VA Medical Center held a summer youth awards ceremony Friday to recognize service from its young volunteers.

Fred L. Malphurs, director of the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, made opening remarks at the event.

"Thank you so much for enriching our lives and the lives of our patients," he told the teens.

Ronald W. Joyner, assistant chief of voluntary service, called the volunteers to receive their certificates. Twelve teens received the 50-hour award, nine received the 100-hour award, and 14 received the 150-hour reward.

Eleven students were given the 300-hour award, and four were recognized for the 500-hour award. Alecia Prince was given the 1,000-hour award.

Eric Pitt was recognized for 1,447 hours of service to the Lake City VAMC within three years. He and Cassandra Phillips, a 150-hour award winner, were also recognized for the compassion they showed by being at the bedside of a hospice veteran as he died in June.

Sharon Timmons, nurse manager of hospice and palliative care, she said she is very proud of Pitt and Phillips.

"It takes a special volunteer to work in the hospice unit," she said. "They have to be very mature and fully focused on being there for the patients and the families for the most critical time of their lives. "These students should be commended"

Phillips will be entering eighth grade at Branford High School.

"I have learned so much," she said. "This is my first summer volunteering here, and I definitely want to do it again."

Pitt used to live in Lake City until his family moved to San Diego.

I learned how important it is to show care for others," he said. "I definitely want to enter the medical field after I graduate.'

Pitt spent the summer visiting family here and volunteering at the Lake City VAMC. Many of the teens plan to use their volunteer experience to apply to scholarships.

Kristin Burke, a Gilchrist country student, was recognized for 50 hours of service. Last weekend, she was named 2005 Pre-Teen Florida (senior) by the American Academy for Pre-Teen Achievers, in Tampa.

Part of the evaluation criteria included volunteer service to the community.

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